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**SB 1051 AN ACT STRENGTHING CONNECTICUT'S ELECTIONS**

I am a member of the Connecticut Republican State Central Committee and I was the Republican Registrar of Voters in the Town of Chaplin from 2006 until 2015.

My first reaction to this bill is that it's a solution looking for a problem and I don't see much in this bill that really accomplishes anything however, I think this issue needs to be talked about and discussed and this bill is a good starting point.

We need accountability and some semblance of professionalism in the position of Registrar of Voters. I've looked into how other state's run their elections operations and maybe I'm missing something but I have yet to find a state where there are two Registrars from each major party in charge of the operation. I believe there should only be one.

I don't believe that the one Registrar should basically be appointed by the Town Clerk and then be rubber stamped by the Legislative Body because let's face it, that's the main part of this bill. This can be confirmed by the fact that no matter what the Legislative Body does, the Town Clerk has sole discretion to appoint the Deputy Registrar and the assistants. That's just plain wrong.

I am and always have been a firm believer in the more people that are involved in making the decision, the better the decision will be which means I prefer to have my officials elected, not appointed. I've heard the criticism that the current system where the Registrars are essentially selected by the local Town Committees is not professional and reeks of nepotism and that is not as good as if the Registrar or Registrars were appointed. I think changing to a system where only one person (the Town Clerk) essentially appoints the Registrar has a much larger chance of ending up with the exact situation this bill intends to avoid.

Registrars should be trained and probably even required to pass exams on a yearly basis. If that's really what this committee ultimately decides then that training should be administered and handled solely by the Secretary of the State's office, not ROVAC (Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut) and that's going to require additional funding and more staff.

Maybe the position of Registrar of Voters shouldn't be elected. Let's take locally elected Constables vs. a local police force as a comparison. Most municipalities in Connecticut now have either their own professional police force or are taking advantage of the resident state trooper program for this important public service. Maybe the time has come for Registrars to be hired professionals instead of elected officials.

I'm also a strong proponent of home rule at the municipal level however maybe the time has come to have the Registrar of Voters function handled at a state level. As in my local Constable vs. professional police example, professional resident troopers and professional municipal police departments have taken the place of locally elected constables who didn't have to have any professional training or any requirements to hold the office other than winning an election.

In conclusion, if the office of the Secretary of the State is going to be ultimately held accountable for the administration of Connecticut's elections then they need to have the authority and the control to do just that. Under the present system, they do not.

I thank the Government Administration and Elections Committee for raising this bill and starting the discussion.

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